**1869**

# THEME WITH VARIATIONS

## *Lewis Carroll*

Carroll, Lewis (pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) (18321898) - English novelist, poet, photographer, and mathematician, best known for his fantastical childrens' classics. He was a mathematical lecturer at Oxford.

Theme with Variations (1869) - One of Lewis Carroll's poems. Opening lines: I never loved a dear Gazelle- / Nor anything that cost me much:...

### THEME WITH VARIATIONS

[WHY is it that Poetry has never yet been subjected to that process of Dilution which has proved so advantageous to her sister-art Music? The Diluter gives us first a few notes of some well-known Air, then a dozen bars of his own, then a few more notes of the Air, and so on alternately: thus saving the listener, if not from all risk of recognizing the melody at all, at least from the too-exciting transports which it might produce in a more concentrated form. The process is termed "setting" by Composers, and any one, that has ever experienced the emotion of being unexpectedly set down in a heap of mortar, will recognize the truthfulness of this happy phrase.

For truly, just as the genuine Epicure lingers lovingly over a morsel of supreme Venison- whose every fibre seems to murmur "Excelsior!"- yet swallows, ere returning to the toothsome dainty, great mouthfuls of oatmeal-porridge and winkles: and just as the perfect Connoisseur in Claret permits himself but one delicate sip, and then tosses off a pint or more of boarding-school beer: so also-]

*I NEVER loved a dear GazelleNor anything that cost me much: High Prices Profit those who sell, But why should I be fond of such?*

To glad me with his soft black eye My son comes trotting home from school; He's had a fight but can't tell whyHe always was a little fool!

But, when he came to know me well, He kicked me out, her testy Sire:

And when I stained my hair, that Belle Might note the change, and thus admire

And love me, it was sure to dye A muddy green, or staring blue:

Whilst one might trace, with half an eye, The still triumphant carrot through.

**THE END**